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ACTION HA-09

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INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 EB-01 DODE-00 ARA-01
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
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INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PN
USCINCLANT NORFOLK VA
USAFSO HOWARD AFB PN//DOI/LAI//

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 02714

CINCSO AND CINCLANT ALSO FOR INTAFF

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PHUM, PGOV, AR,
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHT UNDERSECRETARY RESIGNS: HUMAN
- RIGHTS GROUP TO PROTEST MENEM'S POLICIES

1. (U) INTERIOR MINISTRY UNDERSECRETARY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, GUILLERMO FRUGONI REY, RESIGNED FROM HIS POSITION MARCH 5. IN HIS RESIGNATION LETTER TO PRESIDENT MENEM HE NOTED THIS ACTION WAS TO SHOW HIS DISAGREEMENT WITH A DECREE SIGNED BY MENEM WHICH WOULD ALLOW THE ARMED FORCES TO INTERVQE IN CASES OF SOCIAL UNREST.

2. (C) HUMAN RIGHTS COMMUNITY SPOKESMEN HAVE PRIVATELY DEPLORED FRUGONI HEY'S DECISION TO STEP DOWN. LEADERS OF THE CENTER FOR LEGAL AND SOCIAL STUDIES (CELS) TOLD EMBOFF AND A VISITING SENATE STAFF MEMBER THAT THIS
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DEPRIVES THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMUNITY OF IT MOST IMPORTANT DIRECT CONTACT POINT WITH THE MENEM ADMINISTRATION. ON MARCH 16 TOP OFFICIALS OF THE GRANDMOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO MADE THE SAME POINT, NOTING THAT FURGONI REY'S

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RESIGNATION NOW MAKES IT EASIER FOR THE ADMINISTRATION TO
DOWNGRADE THIS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE IN THE INTERIOR
MINISTRY. THEIR CONCERNS ARE THAT INTERIOR MINISTRY
OFFICIALS, IN THEIR EFFORTS TO MEET COST REDUCTION
REGULATIONS, MAY PUT THE HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE IN SOME
OBSCURE DIRECTORATE UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF LOWER-LEVEL
OFFICIALS. LIKE CELS OFFICIALS, THE GRANDMOTHERS
STRESSED THAT LEGAL CHALLENGES WILL BE MADE TO THIS
LATEST DECREE, AND THEY WOULD HAVE PREFERRED FRUGONI REY
TO HAVE STAYED IN PLACE WHILE THIS PROCESS UNWINDS. BOTH
GROUPS STRESSED THEY DID NOT TAKE FURGONI REY'S DECISION
TO STEP DOWN AS A SIGN THAT THE MENEM GOVERNMENT WAS NOT
INTERESTED IN HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. THEY RECOGNIZED THAT
PRIORITIES HAVE CHANGED BUT ARE CERTAIN MENEM AND HIS
OFFICIALS REMAIN COMMITTED TO HUMAN RIGHTS.

3. (U) THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMUNITY WILL HOLD A
DEMONSTRATION MARCH 16 TO SHOW OPPOSITION TO THE GOA'S
ECONOMIC POLICIES AND THE DECREE PERMITTING THE ARMED
FORCES TO ACT IN CASES OF SOCIAL UNREST. THIS IS
EXPECTED TO ATTRACT THE SUPPORT OF A WIDE RANGE OF GROUPS
OPPOSED TO GOA POLICIES. INCLUDING POLITICAL PARTIES AND
TRADE UNIONS. ACCORDING TO LEADERS IN CELS AND THE
GRANDMOTHERS, THIS EVENT IS NOT AGAINST MENEM BUT IS
DESIGNED TO CALL HIS ATTENTION TO THE HUMAN COSTS
INVOLVED IN HIS ECONOMIC PROGRAMS.

4. (C) COMMENT: FURGONI REY HAD EXPRESSED DISCONTENT
ABOUT HIS POSITION FROM THE VERY BEGINNING. HE TOLD
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EMBOFF SHORTLY AFTER HIS DESIGNATION TO THIS JOB THAT HE
FELT UNCOMFORTABLE IN A GOVERNMENT POSITION. HE LATER
NOTED HE HAD THOUGHT ABOUT RESIGNING WHEN MENEM ISSUED A
PARDON TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS IN LATE 1989. HIS
RESIGNATION OVER THE LATEST DECREE WAS, THEREFORE, NOT
SURPRISING.

TODMAN

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